

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A narrative reading. Be sure you understand the context (read 7:10–11). Amos the prophet is being thrown out by Amaziah, the king's priest.

Amos = AY-m*s

Amaziah = am-uh-Zī-uh; Bethel = BETH*1

With real energy. The message is, "Get out of here and stop bothering us!" "Visionary!" is meant to be sarcastic. Judah = joo-duh

prophesying = PROF-uh-sī-ing

prophesy = PROF-uh-sī

With righteous self-importance.

Contrast Amos' humility with Amaziah's haughtiness.

The simple truth.

Urgently, it was a commissioning Amos could not resist.

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

A narrative has characters, dialogue, a setting, and action. Help your listeners see the story unfold, keep characters distinct, and be clear about shifts in setting.

LECTIONARY #104

READING I Amos 7:12–15

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos,
"Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah!
There earn your bread by prophesying,
but never again prophesy in Bethel;
for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple."
 Amos answered Amaziah, **"I was no prophet,**
nor have I belonged to a company of prophets;
I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores.
The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me,
Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 85:9–10, 11–12, 13–14 (8)

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;

the LORD—for he proclaims peace.

Near indeed is his salvation to those who

fear him,

glory dwelling in our land.

Kindness and truth shall meet;

justice and peace shall kiss.

Truth shall spring out of the earth,

and justice shall look down from heaven.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;

our land shall yield its increase.

Justice shall walk before him,

and prepare the way of his steps.

READING I

Was Amaziah offering friendly advice to Amos or was he by royal office or his own authority ordering Amos out of the country? His use of the term "visionary" may be demeaning, but nothing else in his language leads one to conclude that he was hostile to the prophet. What is clear is that his authority over the Bethel sanctuary gave him the right to forbid Amos to prophesy there.

Amos reacts to the attempt to classify him as a "prophet-for-hire," exchanging his oracles for payment. To disassociate himself from this kind of professional prophet,

he rejects the title *nabi'* ("prophet"). By profession he is an animal herdsman and specialist in the maturation of the "sycamore" fruit (similar to a fig), but God commissioned him to prophesy to Israel. In the performance of his profession God sent Amos to prophesy in the sanctuary; in the end, Amaziah offended God by resisting Amos.

READING II

In Greek letter-writing the greeting was usually followed by a thanksgiving and a wish for the health of the recipient. Pauline letters have lengthened the thanksgiving to address the

faith of the reader, and in it the Apostle anticipates themes of the letter. In the present blessing Paul praises "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"—such praise being the appropriate response to benefits the Father confers. Paul weaves the function of Christ as heavenly mediator into the praise of God as benefactor.

A series of clauses spells out the promise of salvation: God blessed us in Christ and destined us for adoption in him; redemption is through Christ's blood; knowledge of God's will unites all things in Christ; we are destined to praise God in

An exhortatory reading containing six sentences of praise to God. Let joy show in your voice and face, but vary your tone with each statement. Keep thoughts together by pausing only at commas and periods, except as noted.

Ephesians = ee-FEE-shuhnz

Start strong! Use the top of your range of inflection and keep your pace up.

Slow on "as he chose us in him."

Maintain energy but use a more intimate tone, reflecting the love in this adoptive relationship.

Build slightly. Beyond our adoption, we also have redemption.

Linger over the words "riches" and "lavished."

Build again, with excitement. Even more than redemption, we have wisdom and knowledge.

Brief pause after "will."

Slowly and emphatically. Paul repeats the significance of being chosen.

Return to a normal pace.

Slow again on this phrase, then take a slightly longer pause to set up the final thought.

Look directly into the assembly. Emphasize "In him you also."

With great joy!

Slow to the end.

Christ, and through the preaching of the Gospel, Gentiles ("you") are included in this inheritance. That he "chose us" includes Christians along with Israel and places us in the same boat as Jesus' first disciples. Christ's exaltation in the heavens provides the foundation for bringing all of creation into unity under Christ as head. The final words pick up the intent of the whole section, "to the praise of his glory." The election of God's people is universal: we are all called to holiness. As adopted children we have been elected to form part of God's people.

READING II Ephesians 1:3-14

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

[Blessed be the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.]

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

[Shorter: Ephesians 1:3-10 (see brackets)]

GOSPEL The mission of the Twelve consists of their exercise of authority in Word and power as representatives of Jesus, anticipating the international mission at the end of the Gospel (16:15-18), which is an extension of Jesus' initial preaching (1:14-15). In the present missionary instructions Jesus exhorted his Apostles to depend on God and on the community for food and shelter. In the list of accessories Jesus permits the use of a walking stick and sandals, and there is no prohibition to enter Samaritan towns or pagan territory. These differences from the

other synoptic writers, as well as the prescription of anointing the sick, indicate an adaptation to conditions within and outside Palestine and reflect life in the early Church. One concern arises when the very people to whom the mission is directed reject the missionary: "Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet." Disagreements and frictions frequently happen in our families and communities. Good persons who practice the Gospel values and are deeply committed, at times disagree among themselves or